

RI ARTS

How a chance meeting at a Providence market launched a friendship and an aspiring filmmaker's career

Brown grad Matthew Osubor picked up a shopper's dropped orange. The man he handed it back to turned out to be director Alexandre Rockwell.

By **Juliet Pennington** Updated July 18, 2025, 5:55 a.m.



Louis Family Restaurant co-owner Albert Gianfrancesco, left, Matthew Osubor, center, and Alexandre Rockwell, right, at the Providence restaurant where one of the scenes from "Big Daddy's Flowers" was filmed. JAMES WERT

PROVIDENCE – Matthew Osubor said he will never forget how a random act of kindness in a Whole Foods parking lot in Providence changed the course of his life.

It was the spring of 2024, and as the 27-year-old [aspiring filmmaker](#) was entering the store, he noticed an orange fall out of another customer's shopping bag. He picked it up and handed it to the man.

The two struck up a conversation, and, as it turns out, the man was film director, producer, and screenwriter Alexandre Rockwell, who has received top honors at major film festivals – including the [Sundance Film Festival](#) and the Berlin International Film Festival – and until recently was head of the directing program at New York University's graduate film school.

“We talked for a while. He said that he and his wife [actress and author [Karyn Parsons](#), who played spoiled teen Hilary Banks on the popular TV show “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air”] had recently moved to Providence,” said Osubor. “I told him I loved filmmaking and said, ‘We should do something together.’ Then he gave me his email address.”

The two not only became fast friends, but Rockwell offered the 2019 [Brown University](#) graduate a role in one of his films, “The Projectionist,” last summer, and agreed to serve as the executive producer on Osubor's film, “Big Daddy's Flowers.” Filmed in and around Providence in May and June, it will be released in the coming weeks (the premiere will be in Providence, but a date and location have not been finalized). Osubor said he is currently considering distribution options.

This film is about a flower delivery driver who, Osubor said, is trying to outrun the evils of his childhood. He's the success story of his town, because he's the only one of his friends who is not dead, in prison, or in rehab.

“On the contrary, he has a good, decent job and he stays out of trouble ... but in life even though you might try to avoid trouble, trouble can still find you,” he said. The protagonist begins to suspect that the life he's been living isn't actually what he thought it was and, as

Osubor explained, “everything he knew and believed to be gospel was all just a facade. What happens when you have to choose not between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ options, but between the lesser of two evils?”

The Hamilton, Ohio, native – an only child whose parents emigrated to the United States from Nigeria in 1997, a year before he was born – said he is “very proud” of “Big Daddy’s Flowers,” which he made on a shoestring budget of just \$2,000. Some of the cost-saving measures included starring as the lead – in addition to directing and producing – hiring non-actors, and working out a deal with Parsons to be in his film.

“Karyn is the author of children’s books and runs a nonprofit that tells children stories about the achievements of African Americans. She needed help with her website, so I told her I would do that if she would be a part of this film, since I could never afford her,” said Osubor, who since 2020 has owned a multimedia consulting company that develops media narrative campaigns for clients, including Narragansett Brewing Company, Google, and the New England branch of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Osubor, who lives in Providence with roommates, said that filming in Rhode Island has been “wonderful” not only because it is less expensive than elsewhere, but people have been “so accommodating and supportive.”

“I’ve found the infrastructure/community more open to risk-taking and enterprising filmmaking,” he said. “We had a lot of support rather than apprehension about what our intentions were.”

Osubor didn’t always want to be a filmmaker. His original plan was to go to law school after he graduated from Brown. But he changed his mind after an internship in a government legal office in Washington, D.C., where he witnessed behavior that “went against much of what I stand for.”

It was his disenchantment with politics and witnessing the polarization of people with different viewpoints – and the importance of compromise – that sparked Osubor’s idea

for his feature film, which he referred to as “solid and vulnerable.”

“Films are accessible to people and often take up a fair amount of space in public discourse,” he said. “I love literature [he majored in literary arts at Brown], but you don’t hear people referencing [books] the way you hear them say, ‘Hey, did you watch this series? Did you see this film?’ ”

BIG DADDY'S FLOWERS | OFFICIAL TRAILER | 2025 | HD



Osubor is quick to point out that as much as he enjoyed making “Big Daddy’s Flowers,” it didn’t come without challenges – mostly due to minimal funding. But he said obstacles led to the necessity to “reorient your mind and look at things differently.”

“Rejection should be viewed as a nudge ... it had helped me to learn and grow,” he said.

Rockwell, 68, a father of two who was raised in Cambridge, Mass., said he mentored and worked with many young filmmakers when he was at NYU, and he liked what he saw in Osubor and in his work.

“His way of seeing things, his voice, his narrative ... it’s unique. He’s fun and interesting and kind of odd. Right away I liked his work,” Rockwell said. “He’s very talented and very eager and willing. He jumps right into a situation.”

Osubor said he is grateful for Rockwell's support, mentorship, and now what has grown into a "great friendship."

He said Rockwell has been very helpful and he's looking forward to working in tandem with him to navigate next steps and "defy these norms, think differently and find solutions to whatever future roadblocks that might exist."

"This industry is becoming more accessible for filmmakers like me to enter the arena," Osubor said, "and the sense of confidence I've gained from making this film has been a great takeaway."

[Show comments](#)

©2025 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC